NUMBER 1

The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF WRONGED WOMANHOOD

THE CAPLAN PREM. SUPPLY
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"The man who breaks up my home signs his own death warrant," he said, his face hardening. "There will be no court proceedings and no divorce."
R. of M. G., No. 1.

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THE REDEMPTION OF MARIE GORDON

The Tragic Story of a Wronged Woman.

By Cora Lane Sherman

Chapter 1.

THE WAGER

THE GORDONS had everything to make their married life an ideal one. They had loyal friends, wealth and the contentment that is born of mutual understanding and faith. There had never been a struggle to make both ends meet. Philip Gordon was a good business man, a good husband and a good comrade. Marie was more than satisfied with her quiet, home-loving mate, and with the quiet home he loved.

If there were no thrills in their lives, neither were there any heartaches. They loved each other; they suited each other. A placidly sweet engagement merged very naturally into a sweet married life. And it was all in contradiction of their friends who predicted disaster because Philip and Marie entered upon their matrimonial voyage at an early age.

But having married when still rather young was not the only reason why continued conjugal bliss of the Gordons was regarded as extremely doubtful. The gossips claimed that Marie

would sooner or later show the moral weakness attributed to her older sister, Julia Carey, the actress.

This prediction failed to come true. Marie never showed the least tendency to wander from the straight and narrow path. She remained true to her husband in spite of the fact that she was called upon to face more temptations than the average beautiful woman. And her method of turning down an audacious admirer never left a sting behind.

Two lovely children came to bless their union. The older one, Harry, was a curly-headed cherub of four, the living image of his handsome father. Phyllis, just approaching the third milestone along life's roadway, was destined to rival her mother's beauty.

The most sacred and the most happy hour of the day came when Philip and Marie entered the nursery at bedtime to hear the children lisp the prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep."

No discord would perhaps have arisen if Philip Gordon had not allowed himself to be persuaded to become a member of the Madison Country Club, a fast and ultra-fashionable Chicago social organization. Repeatedly he had cause to regret this.

He no longer attended any of the social functions with his lovely wife. It was unfortunate that he abhorred dancing. It was more unfortunate that Marie loved to trip the light fantastic.

Philip had steadfastly refused to attend any of the weekly dances at the club. But his wife had wheedled him into promising that he would take her to the dance scheduled a few days hence. Marie had made extensive preparations. A modish and low cut gown was ready to be worn.

She had spread the gladsome news among her friends. Scores of eager admirers applied for dances in advance. To young Mrs. Gordon this was to be a new source of happiness.

There was no hint of weakening on Philip's part until the day of the dance. At breakfast he dropped the remark that he dreaded to wear a dress suit. Marie laughed at him when she kissed him goodby as he prepared to leave for his office.

It was just a few minutes past eleven in the morning when the telephone rang. Marie answered it. A light came into her eyes, and the corners of her sweet mouth lifted slightly as she recognized her husband's voice.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, dear," he said. "But I will be detained at the office to-night. I won't be home for dinner, and I am afraid I'll have to miss the dance."

"Miss the dance?" Marie gasped rather than said. "Oh!"

"Yes," her husband explained hurriedly. "I forgot that there was to be a directors' meeting, and I'll have to be present."

"Oh," repeated Marie, a sob in the word.

"But listen," came over the wire, "I'll get through as soon as I can, and I'll meet you at the club. We can at least have the last dance together if you'll save it for your husband."

"No, Philip, I won't go without you," Marie declared.

"Why not?" he demanded.

"I have never gone to a dance without you since we are married," she said. "I'll be lonesome. I'll be a wallflower. And besides, who would care to dance with a mother of two children, except their father."

"Is that so?" Philip snorted. "Well, you won't be a wallflower, I'll predict that. When those fellows see you enter without me, there will be a stampede in your direction. You'll have the time of your life. And there will be a dozen fighting to take you home. But if I don't get there in time to claim that last dance, you come home alone."

Marie felt herself blushing.

"No danger of anything else," she replied. "Besides, I am not going."

"Please go," he begged. "I feel like a beast to interfere always with your pleasure. You love to dance and I want you to go."

She considered for a moment. In her indecision she waited for more encouragement.

"Do you really want me to go?" faintly.

"Indeed I do, dear," replied Philip heartily. His voice grew serious as he added: "But don't let Jack Hoover get fresh with you."

"What is the matter with him?" Marie laughed.

"He is dangerous, and I don't like the way he looks at you when we meet."

"But he is such a swell dancer," she argued.

"Yes, and he has the reputation of being a good home-

breaker," the speaker at the other end of the line retorted. "I don't want him to get a chance to steal my pretty little wife—my very good wife. So stay away from him."

"Alright," Marie smiled. "A good wife always obeys her husband. But I wish you would try to get to the club at least in time for the last dance, will you?"

"You bet, I will, honey-sweet."

That ended the telephone conversation. Mrs. Gordon wondered if any married couple was as happy as she and her husband. How good Philip was. And he was generous, too. He was generous in the things which were more important than money.

Marie spent anxious moments before the mirror that night. Appraising herself coolly, without vanity, she found that she was beautiful. Her face was fresh and without the least trace of a line. Her cheeks were rosy and her eyes were bright. Her figure was still slender and graceful.

It was mother-love, deep and tender, that drew her into the nursery where both of her babies slept. She lingered for quite a while.

Somehow she felt as if she were committing a crime in leaving the children in the care of the nurse this night. But that was not all she felt. There was about her young mother-heart that indefinable sensation of impending disaster.

"I—I don't think I'll go," she said to the nurse. "Do you think I ought to, Annie?" she asked.

Annie, who had been in the employ of the Gordons ever since they were married five years ago, was considered a distinct asset because of her unwavering loyalty and devotion. She loved her mistress and she loved the children.

"But you are all dressed and ready to go, Mrs. Gordon," she ventured timidly.

"Yes, I know," said Marie. "I wish I could get rid of that heavy feeling about my heart. I am afraid——"

"You need not worry about the children," the nurse encouraged. "I'll take the best care of them. I am sure Mr. Gordon would not want you to miss that dance even if he can't go with you."

Marie smiled reminiscently.

"No, he doesn't, Annie. He insisted that I go and enjoy

myself." Then with a sigh, she added: "Well, alright, Annie. But you'll watch over my babies. If anything were to happen to them while I am away, I believe I would die."

"Nothing is going to happen to them," the nurse assured her. "If it will make you feel more at ease, I'll stay in here with the children until you come back from the dance. I don't mind staying up a little late, for I am fond of reading."

Mrs. Gordon, while she did not orally approve of Annie's suggestion, made no comment to the contrary. And the tight cord about her heart seemed to loosen.

She kissed both of her sleeping babies lightly on the cheek, gave Annie an affectionate pat on the shoulder, and left the room to go downstairs. The sudden ring of the telephone stopped her in the reception hall.

With a little cry of joyous anticipation she snatched the receiver from the hook. No doubt it was her husband, and he meant to tell her that the directors' meeting had been postponed, and that he was coming home to accompany her to the dance.

But it was not Philip Gordon. It was Mrs. Hendricks, a neighbor, whose frivolous nature and many flirtations made her popular in a certain sense.

"Hello, Marie," she cried, and the latter's face instantly registered keen disappointment. "Our car is out of commission. The chauffeur took it to the garage, and he just now phoned me that it will take several hours to complete the necessary repairs. I wondered if you would be kind enough to let me ride in your car to the dance."

"Why, I'll be glad to take you with me," replied Marie quickly. And she hoped that the lie would be forgiven. "Your husband is coming too, I suppose."

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Hendricks. "Jim is out of town. I am glad of it in a way. Other women's husbands will dance with me if I don't have my own with me. I am just itching for a new thrill of some kind. And say, dearie, I expect to have a few dances with Phil Gordon. You won't mind, will you?"

"Not in the least." Marie told another fib. "But," she added hastily, "Philip isn't coming. He was detained at the office. There is to be a directors' meeting."

Mrs. Hendricks laughed. It was a laugh which held incre-

dulity and derision. Marie Gordon's body stiffened. She knew what it implied, and it angered her.

"You have the wrong idea about Philip," she said testily.

"Perhaps I have," came back. "But I am not at all sure, dearie. There isn't much difference in married men these days. They are all such good prevaricators."

"Philip is not like that," Mrs. Gordon protested.

"No? Well, I am glad you still have faith in your husband, Marie. Just the same I'll predict that you won't see Alice Procter at the dance to-night."

Marie felt herself getting hot. She knew that Philip and Alice Procter had been sweethearts once. Mrs. Hendricks' suggestion implied that Philip had lied to her. It also implied that Alice Proctor was the reason for the lie.

"And I'll make a wager with you," Mrs. Hendricks' voice came again. "I'll bet you a five pound box of chocolates that I am asked to dance more often than you are. I am willing to do this, knowing that you are seven years younger than I am, and ever so much prettier."

"I'll take you up on that," answered Marie quietly. "And I'll wager another five pound box of candy that Alice Procter will be at the dance when we get there."

"Alright," was the laughing retort. "How soon will you call for me?"

"Within a few minutes. I am ready now."

Marie Gordon hung up the receiver with a hot flush upon her face. Resentment dominated her. How dared that woman insinuate that her husband had lied to her, and that he was spending the evening in the company of Alice Procter?

But the seed of suspicion had been sowed adroitly. Its sting could not be removed. A sense of shame overwhelmed her however, for doubting Philip. He had always been clean and honest.

She was almost tempted to call Mrs. Hendricks up and tell her that she had changed her mind about going to the dance. But Mrs. Hendricks had the reputation of being a dangerous enemy to those who offended her. Then Marie's pride forbid her to weich at the eleventh hour.

However, the really deciding factor was her burning curiosity. It could only be completely satisfied by seeing Alice Procter

at the dance. New determination seized her and she went.

In the light of the Gordon limousine, Mrs. Hendricks stared at her neighbor.

"You are a picture, Marie!" she gasped.

"Do I look well?" Marie dimpled.

"If I were a man, I'd insult you," said Mrs. Hendricks. "Can a woman pay a higher compliment to another woman?"

"It depends on one's idea of a compliment," Mrs. Gordon responded.

"Or one's idea of an insult, perhaps?" the other grinned.

"Can there be two ideas?" asked Marie.

"Oh, yes," vociferated Mrs. Hendricks. "Some married women are insulted if any man wants to kiss them. Others are outraged if any man doesn't want to kiss them. However, cheer up, dearie. Whoever wants to kiss you, will know better than to try."

"I hope so," said Marie primly.

"Really?" And Mrs. Hendricks laughed and changed the subject, much to Marie's relief. They both chatted amiably about the servant problem. They were still engaged in the engrossing subject when the car reached the Madison Country Club.

The clubhouse was ablaze with light. Mrs. Hendricks commented upon the fact.

"I notice," she added, "that the dance committee has a little human sympathy. The verandas are all dark." She squeezed Marie's hand. "But that need not bother you, dear. You are too straight-laced. You won't go out on the veranda, between dances, for a cigarette or a kiss, will you?"

Somehow Marie Gordon no longer minded being teased. Perhaps it was because she wanted to feel that Mrs. Hendricks was deliberately trying to tease her. Or perhaps it was the sudden spirit of adventure tingling in her blood.

This was the first time in five years that she had ever gone out in the evening without being accompanied by her husband.

"I surely would not go out on the veranda to be kissed," she said stoutly.

Mrs. Hendricks shook a warning finger at her.

"One does not always get upon the veranda, what one goes for," she exclaimed. "You better not go at all."

Chapter 2

AT THE DANCE.

FOR JUST a year, the Gordons had been members of the Madison Country Club. At least twenty of its members were millionaires, and the others were well-to-do brokers, business men and professional men. Marie felt that it was a nice club. She liked most of the members. And because of her liking she discounted most of the gossip she heard about the weekly dances.

She had stubbornly refused to believe, for instance, that at these dances all women smoked cigarettes and drank surreptiously and frequently from the silver hip-flasks produced at regular intervals by their male escorts.

But to-night, almost from her entrance, she decided that the gossips had not exaggerated. They had been telling the truth—and a most disagreeable truth at that. The scene she beheld was almost revolting.

The dance was in full swing, and there was a certain abandon in the movements of the couples that could not be ascribed solely to the stimulating music of an unusually large jazz orchestra. One young woman was doing the "shimmy" in a shameless manner while her equally young escort applauded vociferously.

Mrs. Hendricks pinched Marie's arm.

"Good Lord!" she whispered. "They started celebrating early. Look at Jack Hoover. He is all lit up."

Marie looked.

Jack Hoover was a tall, loose-mouthed man of middle age, whose blond hair gave him the look of youth. He was dancing with a girl half his age, and it was apparent that she was keeping him upon his feet with difficulty.

And he was not the only man present who so glaringly evinced his opposition to the Eighteenth Amendment. Quite a few of them were in a state of advanced inebriation.

Marie quickly shifted her gaze from Jack Hoover. Her eyes searched every nook and corner for Alice Procter. And she did

not stop at that. She inquired of friends if Alice was attending the dance.

Answers came in the negative, and Marie gave an involuntary shudder.

"I had a chat with Alice over the phone," one woman said with a surreptitious glance at Mrs. Hendricks. "Alice told me that

"If I were you, Marie," she said at length, "I'd tell Phil all about it. I am sure he would understand. He loves you so devotedly." There was a shaft of irony in the last words.

she was going to the opera first and that she would come to the dance afterward."

Mrs. Hendricks' smile was one of malicious triumph.

"Well dearie," she whispered to Mrs. Gordon, "you lose one

of the bets. I am sorry you feel so badly about it."

With an effort Marie held herself under control. But her air of intended indifference was not convincing. The sudden crimson splashes on her cheeks were unnatural. The quick flash of her dark eyes betrayed the powerful emotion that engulfed her.

"Yes," she admitted, her voice coming with almost a sob, "you win one of the bets, but I shall win the other."

"Don't be too sure about that," Mrs. Hendricks answered. Her laugh was like a dagger in Marie Gordon's heart. "Here comes Tom Atkinson now. Of course, he wants to have the first dance with me."

Marie was disgusted. But she swore under her breath that she would be a good sport or die in the attempt. This was not the time to be a prude. Then she felt admiring eyes upon her. The spirit of recklessness possessed her. The spirit of adventure tingled more sharply in her veins.

Mrs. Hendricks tasted defeat, for Tom Atkinson made straight for Marie Gordon.

"What a pleasure to see you here, Mrs. Gordon," he cried with a curt nod to Mrs. Hendricks. "Where is Philip? Didn't he come with you?"

Marie explained her husband's absence in a few trembling words.

"Ah, then I crave the privilege of the first dance," Atkinson smiled.

She acquiesced, smiling in return. As the jazz orchestra began a lively fox-trot, she gave herself into the man's arms. All through the dance she kept an eye on Mrs. Hendricks. No one had asked the latter to be his partner.

Mrs. Gordon knew Tom Atkinson well enough to accept his attention without feeling a pang of regret or a twitch of her conscience. She frankly liked his good-natured laugh and honest face. He was one of the few really desirable bachelors present.

As the evening wore on, Marie continued to watch for the sight of Alice Procter. And occasionally she glanced across the floor where Mrs. Hendricks held court seated on a chair.

Mrs. Hendricks danced occasionally, while Marie Gordon was in constant demand.

Mrs. Hendricks did not mind the losing of a five pound box of chocolates. But she did mind that she had suddenly been replaced as the social favorite by Marie Gordon. It galled her to relinquish her popularity to another woman.

Once, as they brushed elbows after a dance, she detained Marie long enough to whisper with all the venom she could put into the words:

"You are having the time of your life, dearie, aren't you? Well, I don't blame you. It is so convenient when one's husband is detained at his office by a directors' meeting, isn't it? It wouldn't surprise me though, to see him enter about midnight with Alice Procter on his arm."

Marie turned a shade paler and passed on quickly. The atmosphere in the room suddenly grew stifling. She must have a breath of fresh air on the veranda. It was then that she came face to face with Jack Hoover.

"Hello, Mrs. Gordon," he greeted rather boisterously. "What bliss to see you among us. You know, I have a notion to give Tom Atkinson a thrashing for monopolizing you all evening. But this is the end of that. I simply must have a few dances with you."

Mrs. Gordon looked the speaker over carefully. He did not appear to be quite so much under the influence of strong drink. She recalled her husband's warning against this man.

"I—I am very tired," she said falteringly. "I would rather not dance any more to-night?"

"But you must dance with me at least once," he insisted.

A slight frown furrowed her white brow.

"By jove, you are the reigning belle to-night," Hoover said as he came a step closer. "I didn't know a woman could be so sinfully beautiful, Mrs. Gordon."

"Is this your usual method of approach?" Marie asked coldly.

"I try any kind of a beginning," he replied with an amiable grin. "Don't you like this one?"

"It sounds rather young to me, Mr. Hoover."

He laughed.

"You'd make any man forget his years and his wisdom," he told her. "The moment I saw you here to-night, I was conquered.

If you don't care to dance again, I hope you won't mind if I talk to you for a little while. May I?"

Without waiting for an answer he brought two chairs and placed them close together. He bent over her with obvious devotion, and his bold eyes fixed themsleves on hers.

"You look absolutely ravishing," he breathed into her ear. "And what luck to see you alone here to-night. How did you manage to leave your faithful husband at home?"

Amid furious blushes Marie explained.

"A directors' meeting, eh?" he smiled sardonically. "How I wish I were a business man. Business furnishes so many plausible excuses."

Mrs. Gordon did not answer. Her attention had been attracted by the entrance of a lavishly gowned woman. It was Alice Procter. A quick glance at her wristwatch told her that it was three minutes past eleven-thirty. The time did not matter much, but just the same she kept staring in the direction of the door.

What was there about Alice Procter that gave her such a shock? A wave of fierce hatred swept over Marie. It grew into something mere words could not express, when an instant later she saw her husband bob up back of Miss Procter.

"God, they came in together!" she breathed, her mind tortured by the most horrible suspicion. "And Mrs. Hendricks was right!"

Marie could not have met her husband face to face that moment if her very life had depended upon it. And to make matters worse, he was looking right at her and made a move to join her. There was a dark frown on his handsome countenance, but it vanished quickly as Alice Procter addressed him.

Jack Hoover apparently enjoyed the scene.

"Miss Procter is a devilishly pretty girl," he murmured. "Your husband seems to have quite a crush on her."

Mrs. Gordon's eyes flashed. Defiance dominated her. Two could play at that sort of a game.

"Take me out of here, Mr. Hoover," she said in a breath.

He rose at once, and drawing Marie's arm through his, they quitted the room together. Of course, Philip Gordon saw it. He made a move as if to follow them, but Alice Procter detained him.

Once in the shielding darkness of the veranda, Jack Hoover did the susual thing when alone with a lovely woman. He promptly seized Marie in his arms and kissed her full upon the lips.

"How dare you?" she blazed at him.

"A kiss won't do any harm," said Hoover.

There was a slight movement in back of them. Marie did not notice it, but the man did. His smile was that of one who expected something important o happen. And happen it did.

Marie did not know the danger which lurked but a few feet away. She thought only of the danger which lay in the probability that Jack Hoover would try to kiss her again. She turned swiftly to get away from him. He followed even swifter.

Her right hand was raised for a blow. Hoover stepped in close, which caused her hand to make short circuit and land around his neck.

That same moment he held her in an embrace that her waning strength could not successfully combat.

And even while she struggled against the man's kiss, there came an explosion and a glare of light.

"My God, what was that?" Marie gasped as she broke away.

"I guess some fool hiding back there was the victim of a loaded cigar," Jack Hoover replied lightly. "They will explode like that."

The explanation seemed perfectly logical, but it was not near the truth. And there was to be a dreadful aftermath to this scene on the dark veranda.

Hoover's attitude had changed suddenly. He became apologetic.

"I—I hope you will forgive me, Mrs. Gordon," he said, his voice trembling with feigned emotion. "I am sorry I took such unwarranted liberty. I promise it will never happen again."

"You bet it won't!" Marie shot back. "Please take me inside."

Appearances were against the couple as they returned to the dance hall. Mrs. Gordon's hair was slightly disarranged, and her lovely features burned with vexation. Jack Hoover looked crest-fallen. He resembled a boy drastically punished for some mis-

chievous act. It could readily be seen that he felt uneasy.

They stood side by side, watching the dancers. Mrs. Hendricks swept past them in the arms of Philip Gordon.

Marie caught the half angry, half defiant expression in her husband's eyes for a fleeting moment, then turned. She could not bear to look at the couple. She waited until the music ceased, then walked away from Jack Hoover without saying a word.

Mrs. Gordon had reached one of the exits when she was intercepted by Philip. Mrs. Hendricks was still with him.

"Hello, dearie," the latter cried, "I want to thank you for loaning me your husband. We just finished the most wonderful dance. Some dancer he is."

Marie stuck out her chin with a move that suggested contempt.

"Oh, you are quite welcome to have him," she replied. "You ought to be a good judge of dancers at your age. You have been at it long enough."

Mrs. Hendricks's eyes flashed ominously.

"Say, dearie," she drawled with an ugly grin, "you better go to the dressing room and fix your hair. I hope Jack Hoover did not try to kiss you out there on the veranda."

"Indeed, he didn't," Marie returned coldly. Then to her husband: "I want to go home, Philip."

He nodded gravely and remained silent. Nothing was said about the last dance they were to have had together. And perhaps it was better so. Any sort of speech would have led to a demand for an explanation. And explanations would undoubtedly have precipitated a quarrel in the present state of their minds.

"Don't forget I am coming with you," said Mrs. Hendricks. "You wouldn't be mean enough to leave me marooned among these Babylonians."

"Of course, you are coming with us," Philip Gordon returned quietly. "That is understood."

"Thanks," Mrs. Hendricks smiled wickedly, and linked her arm through Philip's. "You won't mind this, do you?" she said to Marie."

"Not in the least," the latter answered as she walked on alone. "Enjoy it while you have the chance."

Surprise and consternation marked the sudden departure of the Gordons. There was a general shaking of heads and much wagging of tongues. Alice Procter, standing a short distance away, was grinning. There was hatred in her heart for Marie Gordon, and an unsatisfied longing for Philip.

Chapter 3

BLACKMAIL.

ON THE following morning, the servants went about their duties filled with awe. It was a morning long to be remembered in the Gordon household. There had been a bitter quarrel between the master of the house and his wife during the late hours of the night. Accusations and denials were followed by counter-accusations. Mrs. Gordon had gone to her room in tears, while Philip remained up and paced the floor of the library until almost daylight.

Marie had done practically the same thing in her boudoir. Sleep was out of the question. She, too, had walked the floor wringing her hands and fighting back the sobs that rose in her throat. It was nearly eight o'clock when she made her way to the nursery. Her eyes were still red and there was a constant quivering about her sensitive mouth.

The children were being dressed by the faithful Annie. As Marie entered, they both ran to meet her with shouts of joy. Little Harry, an unusually affectionate boy, clung to his mother the longest. He remained silent until his kisses tasted salt.

"Oh, muvver," he exclaimed, his face sorrowful, "you are crying."

"No, I am not," Marie denied. "I am not crying, darling. Why should I? Haven't I the dearest little boy in all the world, and the sweetest baby girl?"

"But you are crying," the lad insisted.

"Well, if I am," the mother replied as she broke down, "it is because I am so happy."

Happy? Ah, if she only could have told them that her heart was breaking. With an impetuous motion she swept both of the children into her arms and hugged them to her bosom. She made a determined effort to stifle her sobs, but she was not capable of the task.

Annie stood there with tears in her honest eyes. Something was wrong. Yes, something was dreadfully wrong.

When Mrs. Gordon left the nursery a few minutes later, she appeared to be quite composed. Those moments with her children had served to brush away the cobwebs of bitterness.

In the hall downstairs she met her husband. He was just reaching for his hat and coat.

"Why, Phil!" she cried. "Are you leaving?"

"Yes. What about it?" he said curtly.

"But you haven't had any breakfast. Aren't you coming in to eat with me?"

"No," grunted Philip, and then, after a pause added: "I don't want any breakfast. What you handed me last night will do for some time to come."

Marie brushed the moisture from her lashes. Her mouth drooped pathetically at the corners.

"Must we—must we renew our quarrel, dear?" she murmured. "I thought I explained everything to you. I believe what you told me about meeting Alice Procter quite by accident when you came to the dance last night."

"Now look here," he replied savagely, "I know all that, but it is hard for me to forget your conduct with Hoover last night. I warned you against him. Why did you choose him of all men as your escort when you wanted to go out on the dark veranda? If you had to have a new thrill, why didn't you——"

"You are wrong," Marie interrupted vehemently. "You wanted me to go to the dance, didn't you? You told me to enjoy myself."

"Yes, but that did not include going out on the veranda and let a cad like Jack Hoover kiss you. The very thought of that man pawing over you makes my blood boil."

"He did no such thing," she flashed back, desperate to settle that question, and conditions seemed to demand the uttering of an

untruth. "He did no such thing," she repeated. "Had he tried it, I would have slapped his face."

"Well, you both looked guilty when you came in," Philip growled. "Even Mrs. Hendricks remarked about your disarranged hair, and——"

And every night before she went to bed she prayed that this one sin would not find her out.

"Let Mrs. Hendricks wash her own dirty linen," Marie broke in quickly. "If I did some of the things she does openly, you'd divorce me. And it might interest you to know that Mrs. Hendricks was the first one to hint that your directors' meeting was

only an excuse to spend the evening with Alice Procter."

Philip Gordon stared at his wife. Painful surprise stood written on his handsome face.

"I—I can't believe it," he replied with a shake of the head. "Mrs. Hendricks is a rather frivolous sort of a woman. But she is frank, and the last one to start such dangerous gossip."

"Alright," said his wife with a sigh. "I don't want to prolong the argument. The servants are listening as they listened last night. And our children must be considered. They are beginning to notice things. Harry insisted on knowing, a moment ago, why I had been crying."

Philip Gordon did not move. He did not even look at his wife. He glared aside. He bit his lip. His hands dug themselves deeper into his pockets. He was in a state of great emotional disturbance.

The mentioning of the children seemed to have softened him. Ah, how he loved them.

When Marie suddenly stepped up to him and placed a hand on his shoulder, he met her eyes in a changed attitude of mind. But what she said really turned the tide.

"Phil, dear," she murmured, "this is all so unnecessary. You don't want me to believe that I have married a jealous, unreasonable monster. I have always been true to you, even in thought. And not because it is a wife's duty, but because I love you with all my heart and soul. Think of the happy years behind us. Think of what it will mean to our dear children if we continue to quarrel. It must not be. It must not be."

The subtle tenderness about her quivering lips conquered him. Her innocent eyes beckoned. And they were in each other's arms, the wild throbbing of their heart speaking what the lips did not attempt to utter.

"Now, you'll come and eat breakfast with me, won't you, Phil," the happy young wife pleaded.

He nodded his assent, and together they went into the dining room. The storm was over. The last cloud had disappeared as the dance became a forbidden subject of discussion.

But after Philip had gone, Marie could not help worrying just a little bit. She became the victim of self-reproach. Why

had she not told her husband the truth about Jack Hoover's conduct? She sought mental refuge behind the argument, that, had she done so, it surely would have resulted in a quarrel between Phil and Hoover.

Of course, Phil was a dear, but he was such a hot headed fellow. Only once had Marie seen him in a fistic combat with a man who had molested her. She never wanted to see it again.

"What a man don't know, won't worry him," Mrs. Hendricks had told her repeatedly. That was true—but!

And so Marie Gordon went into the activities of the day with a song on her lips. It was made joyful by her two lovely children. It seemed that she was happier than she had ever been before. In moments of calm reflection, however, she feared that this was not the last of the dance. She did not know, why, but she anticipated trouble of some sort.

Marie's anticipations were realized late in the afternoon when an unexpected visitor was announced. He gave his name as Jones—an undersized man with a receding forehead, shifty eyes and a tight slit of a mouth.

He wasted no time, but handed Mrs. Gordon a photographic print. It showed her face clearly. It also showed the figure of a man. The man was holding her in his arms, and it was obvious that he had either kissed her, or was about to do so.

Marie gave a gasp of horror. That man on the picture with her was Jack Hoover. The frightful truth rushed upon her like a destroying flood.

It was a flashlight picture which had been taken the night before on the dark veranda of the Madison Country Club. Again she stared at it. It was a horribly comprising position she saw herself in.

"I'll get right down to brass tacks," began Jones. "I have been hearing a lot about the petting parties that goes on on the veranda of the Madison Country Club on dance nights. Thinks I, maybe the wrong people pet the right people. Well, I got a mighty good picture last night. And it is valuable, too.

"I suppose I could get quite a piece of change for it from one of the Chicago newspapers. But, thinks I, why not give the lady a chance? She'll be fair-minded. She'll know that it wouldn't

do her any good to have this picture published.

"Maybe," the scoundrel went on with a grin, "the lady on the picture will buy the prints and the plate from me. They will cost you only five thousand dollars. And what is that for a rich woman like you? You could pay that easy, and it is cheap enough. What do you say?"

Marie was no moral coward, but a sudden panic seized her. What could she do against this damning evidence? She felt absolutely helpless. The man had her in his power.

"You—you can't mean it!" she gasped.

"Mean what?" Jones grinned impudently.

"To force me to buy that picture and the plate from you, Mr. Jones. It was all a frightful mistake. I had never been on the veranda or a dance before. I was the innocent party. I——"

"Innocent, bah!" exclaimed the man. "That's what they all say when they are caught. You'll either come across, or I'll hand the plate over to the newspapers." The scoundrel paused a moment, then added: "Or perhaps you would rather have me go to your husband. He might pay the price."

"No—no!" Mrs. Gordon cried, knocked dizzy by the suggestion. "My husband must not see that picture. Wait—wait!"

She began to pace the floor in a frenzy. What could she do? She had a small bank account of her own, which she drew upon from time to time. But it had never exceeded five hundred dollars. This shameless creature demanded five thousand.

If Philip saw that picture, she stood revealed as a liar,—yes, worse than that.

It had been taken with devilish ingenuity, and at a moment which showed her in an attitude of abandon. If the newspaper got a hold of the plate, society would brand her for life. And in the years to come, her children would be reminded that they had an unworthy mother.

"Oh, no—no, not that!" she murmured, wringing her hands in this nameless agony. Then she burst into a flood of tears.

"Well, how about you?" Jones demanded impatiently. "Is it a bargain or not?"

"I—I can't pay you that sum now," Marie cried, driven to bay. "But I'll give you every cent of ready cash I have. I have

four hundred dollars in the bank. Come for that to-morrow. The rest I will pay in monthly installments."

Jones showed an ugly brand of magnanimity. His slit of a mouth parted in a smile.

"That will be alright with me, lady," he said. "But don't try any monkey business with me. If you are thinking about squealing to the police, I'll make it damned unpleasant for you."

"I am not," she assured him. "Indeed, I am not."

"You can have this picture as a souvenir," the man remarked as he rose. "But the plate I'll keep until all the money has been paid."

"May I have a picture, too?" came from the door.

Marie turned swiftly. A cry of horror died strangling in her throat, and she threw up her hand as one who would ward off a blow. Not a vestige of color remained in her face.

"Alice—Alice Procter!" She framed the words mechanically and nearly fainted.

Miss Procter walked into the room quietly and deliberately. Her eyes were keen and her senses alert. That some real trouble was afoot she saw instantly. She had come at the right time.

Chapter 4

DARK CLOUDS

MARIE GORDON stared at her unexpected visitor as if hypnotized. Alice Procter had come at an hour when her presence was not desired. She came into the room unannounced and found another visitor — a strange man. The man stood facing Marie Gordon with an unmistakable air of authority that bordered on impudence. Marie was obviously in distress. She was white as a sheet, and she trembled.

Alice Procter ignored the man and turned to Marie.

"Oh, what is the matter, dear?" she asked quickly. "You look worried."

Marie could not speak. She found herself in a dreadful

dilemma. And yet she knew she must say something. Alice would never be satisfied without a complete explanation. But how could she explain?

"I'll be back tomorrow about this time," the man broke the intense silence as he prepared to take his departure. "You better have that four hundred ready."

With a clumsy bow to Alice Procter, he hastily quitted the room.

"Who is he and what does he want?" Alice inquired.

"Oh, I am in dreadful trouble," Marie cried, breaking down.

"What is it all about?" Alice demanded like a loyal friend would. "You must tell me, dear. You know I am always ready to help you."

And then Marie confessed.

"It is a case of blackmail," she ended with a sob. "That wretch demands five thousand dollars. I simply can't pay him."

Alice Procter averted her face to hide a smile that was singularly unpleasant. Nor did she speak at once. She felt instinctively that Jack Hoover had some connection with the taking of that flashlight picture.

She recalled having seen him one day on the street with the man who just left the Gordon home. Then suddenly, a great light dawned upon her.

"If I were you, Marie," she said at length, "I'd tell Phil all about it. I am sure he would understand. He loves you so devotedly." There was a shaft of irony in the last words.

"No—no!" cried Marie in despair. "That would only make it worse. I didn't think he'd ever be jealous, but he is. He would never believe that I was an innocent party to that scene on the veranda. That horrible picture shows me in Hoover's arms. And besides," she sobbed, "that man threatened to turn the plate over to the newspapers if I told my husband. Just think of the disgrace."

While the unhappy woman sat, her burning face hidden in her hands Alice Procter did some quick thinking. What a peculiar trick of fate it was. Her heart filled with triumph—evil triumph. This was her hour!

Why should she help the woman who had taken Philip Gordon away from her? She had loved him dearly. His loss had

made her what she was—a reckless, frivolous woman. The knowledge upon which she had stumbled so unwittingly might easily become the wedge needed to pry the Gordons apart.

There would be the inevitable divorce, and then?

But the thing was too tremendous. An unwise move or an unguarded word would spoil it all. She must proceed with utmost caution. But something must be done. It was an opportunity that could not be passed up. And it was the chance she had been waiting for. Alice believed in destiny. This was the hand of fate—fate in a capricious mood.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," she said, laying a hand on Marie's arm. "Five thousand dollars is not such a large sum. I can help you out, and you can pay me back as you have the money to spare."

Mrs. Gordon uttered a cry of relief.

"You—you would?" she faltered.

"Why, of course," smiled Alice. "You don't think I'd leave a dear old friend like you in the lurch. Indeed not."

Again irony had crept into the tone of her voice, but Marie failed to detect it.

"I'll be here to-morrow," Miss Procter went on. "We'll pay the man the five thousand and send him packing. That'll be the end of it. Phil will never find out unless you tell him yourself."

"No danger of that," cried Marie jubilantly.

She sprang up and impulsively threw her arms around Alice Procter's neck. And she received a kiss—the kiss of a female Judas.

That night when Philip Gordon came home, Marie had regained her composure. But she could not hide a certain degree of nervousness.

"If you don't mind I'll go to bed, dear," she told him shortly after dinner was over. "You know," she added with a pitiful attempt at being gay, "I am not used to late hours any more. I think last night's dance was the last one for me."

"And for me," Philip replied devoutly. "I don't feel any too chipper myself. I'll turn in as soon as I finish reading the paper."

Marie kissed him with more affection than usual, then went

to the nursery. As was her wont, she spent an hour romping with the children. It served to deaden the feeling of apprehension still gnawing at her heart.

"Do you love your mother very much, darling?" she said to little Harry as she pressed him to her bosom with sudden ardor.

"I love you so much, muvver." And the boy threw his chubby arms about her neck and hugged her.

"And you, Phyllis?" Marie took her baby girl on her other knee. "Do you love me much, too?"

Phyllis, her large blue eyes glowing with affection, lifted her sweet face and puckered her lips. It was indeed a touching scene. It was the beautiful picture of a beautiful young mother supremely happy. It was the picture of two lovely children utterly content.

Ah, if Marie could have known that a storm was brewing on the horizon of her future. And what a dreadful storm it threatened to be.

In the cozy living room sat Philip Gordon, smoking a cigar and reading the evening paper. As a rule he paid little attention to the column containing society news. And he would have done the same thing now, if his eye had not caught his wife's name.

Then he read the article which dealt with the Madison Country Club dance. It said in part as follows:

"The affair was graced by the presence of Mrs. Philip Gordon, who had become somewhat of a stranger to the social set since her marriage. Mrs. Gordon looked more radiantly beautiful than she did five years ago, when she was one of the most charming debutantes.

"The fact that Mrs. Gordon came without her husband, aroused comment and some speculation. There were those who believed it significant when Alice Procter arrived about midnight accompanied by Philip Gordon. It will be remembered that these two were sweethearts before Marie Carey appeared upon the scene to capture Philip.

"Mrs. Gordon was easily the belle of the ball. Admirers by the score eagerly sought for a dance. Jack Hoover, that dashing pilferer of feminine hearts, seemed to have all the luck."

With a grunt of disgust, Philip Gordon threw the paper aside. He hated Jack Hoover. He hated the Madison Country Club. He hated the weekly dances, and he hated himself for having urged Marie to attend the last one.

"I should have known better," he growled. "But Jack Hoover better keep his distance, or there'll be trouble, and plenty of it for him."

That Philip Gordon was deadly in earnest could be seen by the expression on his handsome face. His lips were firmly pressed together, and his eyes gleamed wickedly.

When the following morning he showed the newspaper article to his wife, she uttered a laugh rather devoid of mirth.

"I don't see anything to laugh about," Philip said seriously. "That damned reporter ought to be horsewhipped. What right has he to insinuate that you and I are no longer on good terms. And was it necessary to say that Jack Hoover had the inside track with you last night?"

Marie blushed furiously when her husband mentioned Hoover's name. Philip saw it.

"By God, if I knew that skunk got fresh with you, I'd kill him!" he cried savagely. "Did he? Did he?" He seized her by the arm and stared into her eyes. "If he did, I want to know it!"

"Of course not," she answered weakly.

He released her, apparently appeased by the assurance.

"The man who breaks up my home signs his own death warrant," he said, his face hardening. "There will not be any court proceedings and no divorce."

"You talk such nonsense, Phil, dear," Marie remarked with forced quietness. "No man in the world could break up our home. I love you and God only knows how I love my two babies."

Before Philip left for his office, she took his face between her hands and kissed him tenderly.

"You trust me, don't you?" she asked, her voice shaking.

"There is no reason why I shouldn't, is there?" he countered.

Marie lowered her eyes and a tear gathered at her lashes. That was not at all the answer she had expected from her husband.

"No, there isn't," she said.

After Philip was gone, she sat down to reflect. She shud-

dered at the thought of what might happen if he saw that flashlight picture which showed her in Jack Hoover's arms. But she determined not to worry about that. Alice Procter would help her remove any such possibility.

Alice arrived early in the afternoon. She appeared to be in a splendid humor.

"Hello, dearie," she greeted Mrs. Gordon and drew a bulging envelope from her purse. "Well, here it is in bills. I just came from the bank. Now let your Mr. Jones come. We'll get rid of him in a hurry."

"I'll never forget this," Marie answered, her eyes soft with grateful emotion. "It is good to have a friend like you, Alice."

The latter smiled.

"You'd help me if I were in trouble, wouldn't you?" she purred.

"Indeed, I would," said Marie.

A moment later Jones was announced. He came into the room grinning impudently.

"I understand what you came for," Alice Procter addressed him. "Here is the money. But you must sign this receipt, stating what you were paid for."

"Certainly, certainly, lady," the scoundrel acquiesced.

The matter was disposed of in a few moments. Alice received the picture and the plate, which she laid on the table. Jones departed immediately.

Marie Gordon stood there, her hands pressed to her breast.

"Oh, thank God, it is all over," she cried fervently. "I shall never be able to thank you enough. I'll pay you back every dollar. And now we must have some tea. I'll order it at once."

As she quitted the room, Alice Procter quickly snatched up the plate and the picture and stuffed them in her purse. Then she glided over to the burning grate fire and threw some paper into it.

When Marie returned she found Alice standing in front of the hearth.

"Your fears are going up into smoke," Miss Procter exclaimed with a short laugh. "And now let me give you a warning, dear. Never go out on a dark veranda again with a man like

Jack Hoover. He is bad medicine for married women."

"I won't," replied Marie devoutly. "I have learned my lesson."

While tea was being served by one of the maids they chatted amiably. But neither referred to the dance. Nor was Jack Hoover's name mentioned.

As Alice Procter was about to take her departure, she faced Marie. They stood eye to eye for a moment. The treacherous woman did not quite succeed in dimming the light of secret triumph in hers.

"Well dear," she purred, "I'll have to run along now. But let me give you one more bit of advice before I go. In the future, if you can't be good, at least be careful."

Marie Gordon blushed vividly at the insinuation.

"Thanks for the advice," she answered, her head raised. "But I have never needed that kind, nor do I need it now. So far as the future is concerned, my whole life will be devoted to my husband and my two children. No outside influences shall wreck my home."

"How nice," the other woman grinned, then added hastily: "I wish you luck, Marie."

The latter shivered quite perceptibly as Alice Procter imprinted another Judas kiss upon her lips. It had a strange effect. For a fleeting moment she experienced a feeling somwhat akin to physical nausea. After Miss Procter had gone, she fell prey to a peculiar mental unrest.

Chapter 3

CAUGHT!

DURING the week which followed, Marie Gordon did not see Alice Procter again. Nor had she any particular desire to get in touch with her socially. She had begun to make arrangements which would enable her to pay back the five thousand dollars loaned to her on monthly installments. So far as she could see now, there were no difficulties confronting her. Phil was always generous in money matters.

The only thing that worried Marie, was the fact that she had been virtually compelled to be untruthful to her husband. And every night before she went to sleep she prayed that this one sin would not find her out.

Phil abhorred lies. He had often mentioned this, as she recalled with a shudder. But all danger was past now. It had been obviated by the prompt assistance of Alice Procter.

And so the usual domestic tranquility reigned in the Gordon household. The Madison Country Club dance was never mentioned again. However, a more pleasant and quite as absorbing a topic for discussion cropped up. Through a real estate dealer Philip Gordon had just acquired a large estate outside of Chicago. It was to be the country home for the family.

"I want you to go with me and see the place," he told Marie one morning.

"Oh, I'll be so glad to," she answered joyously. "Shall we take the children? But," she added without waiting for an answer, "I guess we better not. It is rather cool."

"Yes, it is rather cool." Phil agreed with a pleasant smile. "You better wear a warm wrap, for I am taking the open car so we can enjoy the fresh air."

Marie gave him a smile in return and dressed for the trip.

They drove out in the fresh spring air, enjoying every minute. It was an ideal day. The trees were budding, and the robins were singing.

Philip Gordon had reasons to feel proud. His wealth was piling up. He had a beautiful wife and two lovely children. Pride

looked out of his eyes as he took Marie over the estate.

"Why, it is just wonderful," she exclaimed. "I never dreamed it would be like this, Phil. Such a great house and—why, it resembles an old castle. It reminds me of an English manor."

"It was built by an Englishman," her husband said.

"And look at that tower over there at the west wing," Marie went on delightedly. "Look at those gigantic oak trees, the beautiful garden with the cute little summer house in the center of it. Oh, it will be lovely to spend the summer here."

"The place is called 'Oak Manor.' I suppose the original owner took the name from those trees," said Phil. "Well, dear, I am glad you like it."

Marie gazed at him with shining eyes.

"Like it? Why, Phil, I love it. And how the children will enjoy romping on the big lawn. It will make them healthy and strong."

"That was one of the main reasons why I bought the place," the husband replied. "Our boy seems a little delicate. This is just what he needs. And you and I will find pleasure in spending the quiet evenings all by ourselves."

"Oh, I know, we will, dearest." Marie gazed at her husband with a world of tender love in her eyes. I'll be so glad to get away from our many friends for a while."

On the way back to the city, they talked about nothing but their newly acquired possession. They agreed quickly on the changes to be made. They agreed that life was indeed worth while. They were again the lovers of old.

"Phil," Marie said suddenly, "I feel so happy that I am actually afraid." And she snuggled close up to her husband.

"You must not feel that way," he chided gently. "Why should you? Fear is born in the soul. It comes from within. It is usually the result of one's wrong-doing. It is the voice of one's conscience speaking."

Marie Gordon gave an involuntary shudder. But she pulled herself together quickly. She had done no wrong except allowing Jack Hoover to kiss her. But she had tried to prevent that. What worried her more and more, however, was the fact that she had not

told Phil the absolute truth about the matter. When she heard his voice again, it seemed to come from a great distance.

"A beautiful woman must always be careful," he was saying. "And especially if she is the wife of a rich man. You are both, Marie. I never knew I was so jealous of you until the night of the dance. If I ever saw you in the arms of another man, I believe, I would kill him."

"And—and what would you do to me?" she asked in a breath.

"God, don't ask me that!" Gordon cried with sudden fierceness. "I don't know what I'd do. The mere thought chills me to the bone!"

Again Marie shuddered, and again that silent fear tugged at her heart. She had grown pale.

"You will never see me in the arms of another man," she said in a trembling tone. Poor Marie! Little did she dream how heavily those words would weigh against her.

With a somewhat forced gayety she changed the conversation. By the time they reached home, she was smiling serenely.

It was always her wont to go directly to the nursery whenever they returned from the theater or a long drive. For some reason she followed her husband into the library.

Considerable mail had arrived while they were away. Most of the envelopes contained invitations to social functions. Others held advertising matter. Phil and Marie looked over them together, grinning at each other, until they came to an envelope marked "Personal." And it was addressed to Philip Gordon.

Naturally Marie allowed her husband to open it. What he drew out was not a letter. It was a photographic print—a picture.

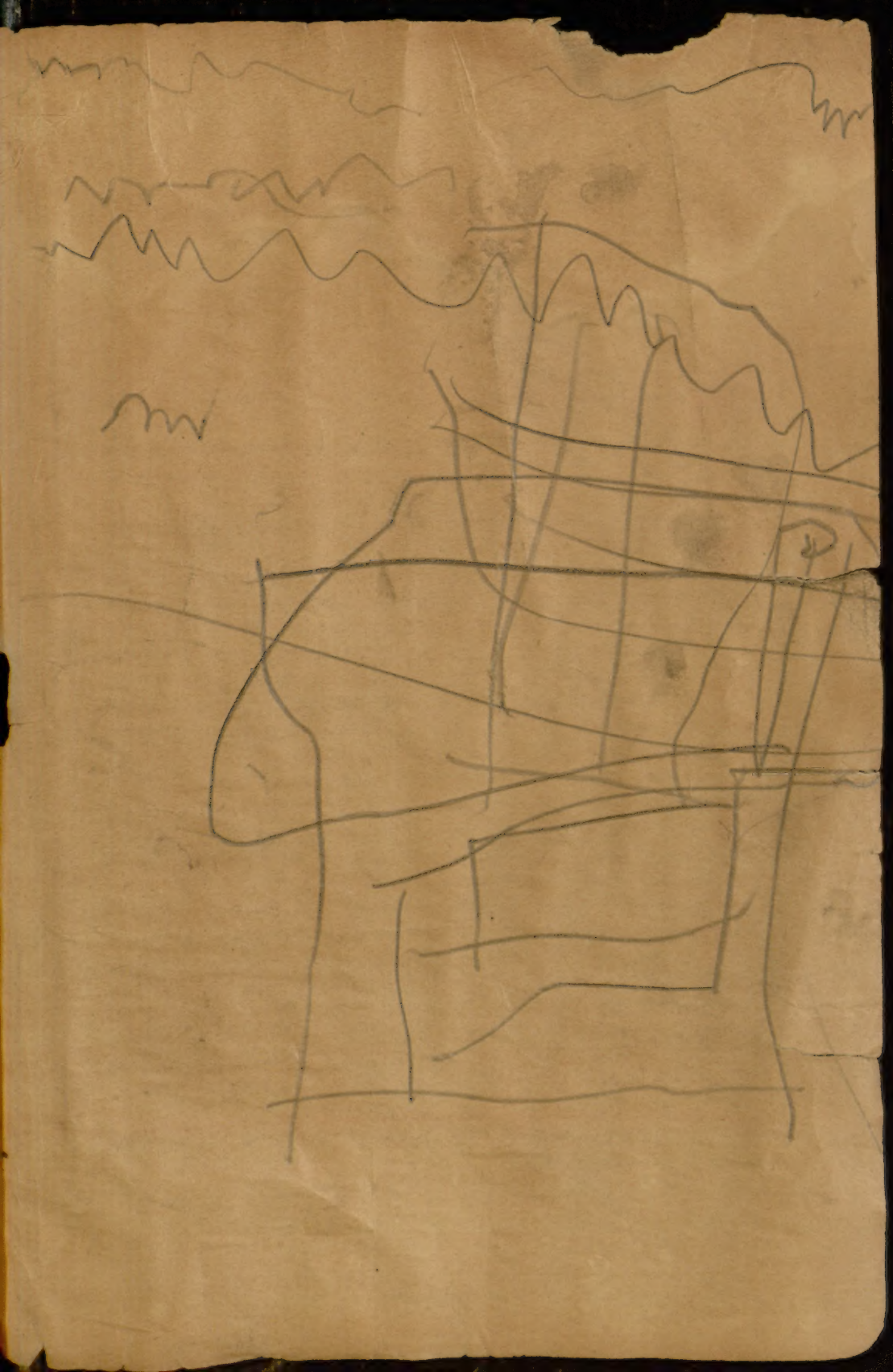
A deathly chill crept into Marie's heart. She saw her husband's face turn white. She saw him press his pale lips together. She saw the sudden gleam in his eyes. She had one glimpse at the picture and knew!

It was the flashlight picture which showed her in Jack Hoover's arms!

"Phil—Phil!" she cried. "Don't look at it!"

But he had already seen it. He whirled upon her with the snarl of an enraged tiger.

Continued in next number



The Redemption of Marie Gordon

by Cora Lane Sherman

UP TO the time that Alice Procter became a regular attendant of the Madison Country Club dances, she cherished the hope of becoming the wife of Philip Gordon, the handsome and wealthy Copper King. But he chose Marie Carey, a very beautiful, modest and demure young miss. It has been truthfully said, that, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

INFURIATED beyond all power of reasoning, and wild with jealousy, Alice sought to wreck the home life of the Gordons. With malevolent eyes and hatred in her heart, she watched the coming of two lovely babies into the life of her happy rival. With the patience and the cunning of a fox she had waited. And then she struck.

THE CLIMAX came when Marie Gordon allowed herself to be coaxed to attend one of the Madison Country Club dances. This was Alice's opportunity. With the help of Jack Hoover, a debonaire society rogue, she succeeded in wreaking a terrible vengeance.

SOCIETY held its collective breath when it became known that Philip Gordon was suing his lovely wife for a divorce. It was one of the most pathetic cases on record in the court of domestic relations, for two innocent little children were left to cry vainly for the return of their mother.

"THE REDEMPTION OF MARIE GORDON," is an unforgettable story of love, jealousy, stern plotting and just retribution. What could be more pitiful than the scene of a discarded wife and heartbroken mother fighting for her children. There are many others no less powerful. And it will make your heart swell with satisfaction at the final reckoning.

The Author.

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